

The College of New Jersey

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Classical Studies

Department Strategic Plan for 2012-2016

Vision Statement

The Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Classical Studies (PRCS) aspires to be a national exemplar in undergraduate teaching and research in philosophy, religion, and classical studies. We aspire to enable our students to attain a deep understanding of these disciplines; to help them develop analytical and critical reasoning skills at the highest levels; to help them explore connections between work in moral and political philosophy and historical and contemporary events and conditions; and to provide courses of study that foster intellectual rigor, interdisciplinary integration, and global awareness and understanding.

Mission Statement

The programs of study administered by Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Classical Studies (PRCS) are central to the mission of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the College of New Jersey. PRCS's primary mission is to offer an exemplary undergraduate philosophy major that prepares students for careers in law, medicine, college teaching, government, business, publishing, and other fields.

The philosophy major supports the goals of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences by fostering analytical rigor in philosophical analysis; providing an historical perspective that leads to a deeper understanding of social, political, ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical issues; inculcating critical reading and thinking skills, promoting ethical reasoning; and improving students' overall ability to cogently articulate arguments for and against philosophical positions both orally and in writing.

Students who successfully complete the philosophy major at TCNJ are expected to be able to:

- 1) explain central concepts, terms, distinctions, questions, arguments, and theories in ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics;
- 2) explain the distinction between valid and invalid arguments, and learn to translate segments of the natural language into symbolic form and to construct proofs;
- 3) explain central questions, arguments, theories, and movements in the history of philosophy, including ancient, modern, and 20th century philosophy;
- 4) identify, interpret, and develop a sustained critique of arguments, theories and positions in philosophical works;
- 5) articulate multiple points of view on philosophical questions demonstrating an understanding of their respective virtues, deficiencies, and implications;
- 6) formulate their own philosophical positions clearly and cogently while demonstrating a firm grasp of opposing positions and objections;
- 7) argue clearly and cogently, orally and in writing, both for positions and against alternatives;
- 8) undertake philosophical research through the appropriate use of primary and secondary texts;
- 9) demonstrate knowledge of how work in philosophy has proceeded in one or more of: aesthetics, environmental ethics, philosophy of language, philosophy of law, philosophy of mind, bioethics, medical ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of science, and philosophy of religion.

In addition to the philosophy major we also are home minors in Religion and Classical Studies. Our courses and faculty also support the Liberal Learning Program, the College Honors Program, the Pre-Law Program, the Self-Designed Majors in Religious Studies and Classical Studies, and several interdisciplinary concentrations and minors. The full time faculty members strive to be productive and accomplished scholars in their fields and excellent undergraduate teachers and mentors. Members of the faculty also participate in and provide leadership to shared governance at the college, school, and departmental levels.

Department Self-Study

During the 2007-2008 academic year, the Department carried out a comprehensive self-study in accordance with College policies and procedures. Our self-study report was evaluated by an external reviewer (Professor Hans Oberdiek of Swarthmore College). The Department also prepared a response to the external reviewer's recommendations, and on the basis of these documents,

prepared a strategic plan that was adopted in May 2008. These documents are on file in the Department Office and the Dean's Office and should be consulted as relevant background to the present document which is an update of the action plan which we adopted in spring 2008.

Strategic Goals and Initiatives

The strategic plan for PRCS is organized into four topic areas: (1) Curriculum and Learning, (2) Students and Advising, (3) Faculty Development, (4) Administration and Resources. Under each topic area we identify several strategic goals for the department or program concerned and for each goal we describe practical strategic initiatives for achieving that goal as well as means for assessing the extent to which we have succeeded in achieving it. The present document should be consulted on a yearly basis to assess the extent to which the department has succeeded in achieving its strategic goals.

(1) Curriculum and Learning: This area concerns the courses and curricula we offer or support, the desired learning outcomes, undergraduate research, interdisciplinarity, and community-engaged learning.

Goal A: The Department curriculum will continue to provide a comprehensive and rigorous understanding of the history of philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

Strategies:

We will regularly offer courses in these foundational areas of philosophy at the introductory (100-level), intermediate (200-level), and advanced (300 and 400) levels.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be demonstrated by whether these courses have been regularly offered. By regularly offered we mean either, every semester, every year, or every other year.

The achievement of our learning goals and outcomes for the philosophy major will be assessed by both direct and indirect methods. (See the "Philosophy Major Assessment Plan" for a description of the assessment methods we intend to employ).

Goal B: The Department curriculum will continue to provide a working

knowledge of logical reasoning including both argument analysis in ordinary language and formal systems and proofs.

Strategies:

We will offer courses in logic in each semester.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be demonstrated by whether these courses have been offered in each semester.

The achievement of our learning goals and outcomes for the philosophy major will be assessed by both direct and indirect methods. (See the "Philosophy Major Assessment Plan" for a description of the assessment methods we intend to employ).

Goal C: The Department curriculum will continue to foster precision, rigor, and creativity in scholarly writing and speaking.

Strategies:

1. We will employ teaching and grading methods that emphasize the development of the skills and competences identified in our learning outcomes in all of our courses.
2. All faculty will include clear standards for grading on syllabi.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of our learning goals and outcomes for the philosophy major will be assessed by both direct and indirect methods. (See the "Philosophy Major Assessment Plan" for a description of the assessment methods we intend to employ).

Goal D: The Department curriculum will continue to provide the tools for the acquisition of a rigorous understanding of ethical theory and its applications to historical and contemporary events and issues.

Strategies:

We will regularly offer a range of courses in ethics, applied ethics, and ethical theory.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be demonstrated by whether one or more of these courses have been offered every semester.

The achievement of our learning goals and outcomes for the philosophy major will be assessed by both direct and indirect methods. (See the "Philosophy Major Assessment Plan" for a description of the assessment methods we intend to employ).

Goal E: The Department curriculum will continue to foster the exploration of interdisciplinary understanding by continuing to providing connections between different fields and disciplines.

Strategies:

We will continue to offer courses and participate in interdisciplinary concentrations and minors.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be demonstrated by whether courses in the department remain integral components of such interdisciplinary concentrations and minors.

The achievement of our learning goals and outcomes for the philosophy major will be assessed by both direct and indirect methods. (See the "Philosophy Major Assessment Plan" for a description of the assessment methods we intend to employ).

We will also monitor the continuing and active participation of faculty in interdisciplinary minors and concentrations.

Goal F: The Department will provide philosophy majors with more opportunities for mentored undergraduate research.

Strategies:

We will encourage majors and minors to work with faculty on topics related to research of interest to both, and to enter their work for presentation in conferences and journals.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be demonstrated by the number of students who work with faculty on topics related to research, as well as the numbers of students who both enter their own research for possible presentation in conferences/journals, and whose work is accepted.

Goal H: We will develop an interdisciplinary major program in Religious Studies.

Strategies:

The proposal for the new major is currently at Stage IV of the XII stage program approval process, and over the next three years we will endeavor to complete all XII stages. We will also, when the budgetary situation permits, pursue a tenure-track line in Religious Studies.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by the progress of the proposal through this XII stage process.

Goal I: We will develop an interdisciplinary major program in Classical Studies

Strategies:

The proposal for the new major is currently at Stage II of the XII stage program approval process, and over the next three years we will endeavor to complete all XII stages. We will also, when the budgetary situation permits, pursue a second tenure-track line in Classical Studies. In order to advance the major proposal and future request for a tenure-track line, we will work actively to increase enrollments in Classical Studies courses, especially Latin 101-201 and Greek 101-201, and to increase the number of students who minor or declare a Liberal Learning interdisciplinary concentration in classical studies.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by the progress of the proposal through the XII stage process and by numbers of students enrolled in Classical Studies courses and programs.

(2) Students and Advising: This area concerns the student population we serve, enrollment trends, advising, co-curricular activities, and preparation for life after graduation.

Goal A: The Department will continue to explore ways of encouraging students to major in philosophy.

Strategies:

1. We will survey undergraduate philosophy programs at comparable

institutions to determine a realistic number of philosophy majors at an institution of our size.

2. We will advertise our major's advantages for students who plan to attend law school, medical school, and other post-graduate programs.
3. We will analyze the reasons why TCNJ students choose to major in philosophy and also the reasons why students choose not to major in philosophy.
4. Philosophy majors will be asked to return to their high schools to talk about studying philosophy at TCNJ.
5. We will reserve up to half the seats in 100 level courses for incoming freshmen.
6. We will also look at how students who double major in Philosophy and something else come to the Philosophy major.
7. We will apply for a chapter of the national honor society in philosophy, Phi Sigma Tau.
8. We will organize annual "Philosopher's Holiday" talks.

Assessment Indicators:

We will track the numbers of majors and minors by semester and note any changes in the numbers of students majoring, double majoring, and minoring in Philosophy.

Goal B: The Department will develop new methods of advising and mentoring of its majors.

Strategies:

1. We will implement the College and School advising recommendations.
2. We will make a special effort to ensure that all majors receive appropriate career mentoring and advising.

Assessment Indicators:

We will annually review the department's implementation of these recommendations, including administering a survey of student attitudes toward advising and career mentoring within the department.

Goal C: The Department will maintain a database of graduates and track their progress in their careers.

Strategies:

1. We will reach out to our graduates and ask them to provide us with

information about their careers.

2. We will maintain our departmental Facebook page as a means of keeping track of what our alumni are doing.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by the proportion of graduates tracked in the database. This will likely require close collaboration with Alumni Affairs to keep track of where our graduates are.

Goal D: The Department will develop new ways of encouraging students to participate in co-curricular activities.

Strategies:

1. The department will explore speaker exchanges with other departments in the area and work with the student-run Philosophical Society and the Phi Sigma Tau Chapter to increase the number of invited speakers.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by the number co-curricular activities available to our students.

(3) Faculty Development: This area encompasses quality of teaching, support for teaching excellence, support for scholarship, support for service, hiring, diversity, and shared governance.

Goal A: The Department will develop new ways to provide greater support for faculty scholarship.

Strategies:

1. We will encourage all faculty members to apply for SOSA.
2. We will encourage the administration to apply release time from teaching for service on School committees and for the development of new courses and programs.
3. We will encourage faculty to apply for mini-grants that would help defray costs of traveling to archives for those faculty for whom this is important.
4. We will encourage faculty to apply for external grants to support research activity.
5. We will organize periodic workshops or seminars on campus that attract others to come to TCNJ.
6. We will continue to maintain our relationship with the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium.

7. We will continue to maintain our relationship with the New Jersey Regional Philosophy Association.

Assessment Indicators:

We will track the number of SOSA awards garnered by department faculty and other forms of release time. We will also track and record the numbers of external grants awarded, and symposia, conferences and other events sponsored.

Goal B: Hire at least one full-time faculty member in Religion.

Strategies:

We will make the case to the administration of the need for this position.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by whether the administration has granted a tenure-track line in Religion.

(4) Administration and Resources: The area encompasses leadership and internal governance, staff resources, work load, infrastructure, classrooms, technology, and library resources.

Goal A: Provide support and training for a new department chairperson.

Strategies:

1. We will identify a department member willing to serve as chair and have current chair serve as mentor.

Assessment Indicators:

1. Professor Melinda Roberts was elected chair in December 2012 and will succeed the current chair, Professor Morton Winston, in July 2012.
2. Mort has been mentoring Melinda during spring 2012.

Goal B: Insure that workloads of faculty are fair and that the burdens of administration and service shared equitably.

Strategies:

We will perform a department review of administrative and service duties of department members and hold a meeting to discuss the distribution of workloads.

Assessment Indicators:

This achievement of this goal will be indicated by whether the meeting and discussion have taken place and by surveying department members concerning their satisfaction with the distribution of workloads.

Goal C: Secure at least one additional dedicated “smart” classroom.**Strategies:**

We will make the case to the administration concerning our need of such an additional classroom.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by whether the classroom has been secured.

Goal D: Assess library holdings in philosophy, religion, and classical studies and prioritize filling gaps in the current collection.**Strategies:**

We will have faculty members annually survey relevant collections in their respective specializations to determine the extent of any gaps. If gaps are found, this should be made known to the library liaison who will request needed purchases.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by whether identified gaps in the library collections have been filled on an annual basis.

Goal E: Secure additional office space for new hire in religion.**Strategies:**

We will make the case to the administration concerning our need of such additional office space.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by whether the office space has been secured.

Goal F: Improve office space and facilities for adjunct faculty

Strategies:

We will make the case to the administration concerning our need for such improvements.

Assessment Indicators:

The achievement of this goal will be indicated by whether the improvements have been secured.

Implementation Plan

The work of implementing the strategic plan and the assessment plan will unfold over the next five years in three stages. The goals with the highest priority will be addressed first, those with medium priority addressed next, and those with the lowest priority addressed last in accordance with the following schedule:

Priority 1 Goals: (2012-2013)

- (1) Goals 1 A-D - Implement the assessment plan for learning outcomes for the philosophy major.
- (2) Goal 1 F – Increase opportunities for mentored undergraduate research.
- (3) Goal 2 A – Increase number of philosophy majors
- (4) Goal 2 B – Develop new methods for advising and mentoring majors.

Priority 2 Goals: (2013-2014)

- (1) Goal 1 H – Approve new interdisciplinary major in Religious Studies.
- (2) Goal 1 I – Approve new interdisciplinary major in Classical Studies.
- (3) Goal 3 A – Increase support for faculty scholarship.

Priority 3 Goals: (2014-2016)

- (1) Goal 3 B - Hire a new full-time faculty member in religion.
- (2) Goal 4 E – Secure office for new hire in religion.
- (3) Goals 1 E, 2 C, 4 A, 4 B, 4 C, 4 D, and 4 F – are on-going.

The members of the department of Philosophy, Religion, and Classical Studies will review this plan annually and make adjustments in it as needed. The overall

responsibility for ensuring that the plan is properly implemented is the Chair's, although he/she may delegate specific tasks or tracks of work to individuals or subcommittees of the whole.

MEW

May 8, 2012